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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet on working with volunteers is the tenth of 16 in a series to provide leaders in adult activities with sound introductory material to give practical help in using a method of adult education or working in a particular area. Its objective is to help volunteers and the professionals who work with them improve their effectiveness. Seven articles and how-tos are included. "Who Volunteers and Why?" and "How Some Find Time to Volunteer" look at the motives of the volunteer and at the homes and problems they may have left behind. "The Role of the Recruiting Agency" tells what the agency wants to get out of the relationship and suggests some ways it can help itself to get it. The next three articles deal with the three most significant points of contact between the professional and the volunteer--"Placement," "Training," and "Supervision." "Volunteers in the Church" presents the volunteer within a particular institutional setting and takes up the problem presented when the volunteer is more highly skilled at the job he has taken on than the professional with whom he serves. (YLB)

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*Leadership Pamphlet #10*

A practical aid to leaders in education, government, welfare, health, farm, labor, religion, industry, and the community . . .

# WORKING WITH VOLUNTEERS

How volunteers and the professionals who work with them can improve their effectiveness through:

- mutual understanding
- satisfactory placement
- effective training
- helpful supervision

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Adult Education Association of the U.S.A.

**Leadership Pamphlets are prepared and distributed by the Adult Education Association of the U.S.A. Each pamphlet provides leaders in adult activities with sound introductory material which can give practical help in using an important method of adult education or working in a particular area with insight and skill.**

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P14—Better Boards and Committees
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P16—Training in Human Relations

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**810 Eighteenth Street, Northwest**
**Washington, D.C. 20006**



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction ---------- 3

Who Volunteers and Why? ---------- 5
By Julia Abrahamson, *Formerly Hyde-Park Kenwood Community Conference, Chicago*

How Some Find Time to Volunteer ----------13
By Kenneth D. Benne, *Boston University*

The Role of the Recruiting Agency ----------21
By Kathleen Ormsby Larkin, *Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago*

Placement ----------26
By Martina C. Miller, *Junior League of Chicago*

Training ----------33
By Josephine H. Pollock, *Home Economics Extension, Madison, Wis.*

Supervision ----------38
By Paula Menkin, *Past President, League of Women Voters of Los Angeles*

Volunteers in the Church ----------45
By Calvin De Vries, *Fourth Presbyterian Church, Chicago*

For Further Study ----------Inside Back Cover

*"I'd like to volunteer for some sort of organization work."*

2

# *INTRODUCTION*

The variety of terms applied to volunteers speaks in itself for their importance. Lay leaders in home extension, church, and adult education classes, stewards in the trade union, officers and committeemen in voluntary organizations, hospital aides—whatever the name—volunteers are the non-paid people who give their time to furthering the purposes of an agency or organization.

By and large their story is also the story of the professional—the trained social worker, county agent, executive, clergyman, nurse, the experienced organization president, etc., to whom the volunteer is responsible and with whom he usually works closely.

The relationship between the volunteer and the professional is the central problem of the articles on the following pages. Julia Abrahamson and Kenneth Benne look at the motives of the volunteer and a little at the homes and problems they may have left behind during their hours of service. Kathleen Larkin tells what the agency wants to get out of the relationship and suggests some ways it can help itself to get it. Martina Miller, Josephine Pollock, and Paula Menkin deal with the three most significant points of contact between the professional and the volunteer—placement, training, and supervision. Calvin De Vries presents the volunteer within a particular institutional setting—the church—and takes up the problem presented when the volunteer is more highly skilled at the job he has taken on than the professional with whom he serves.

The authors of these articles come from a variety of settings where they have gained practical experience in working with volunteers. Each brings the special understandings he has gained from his particular field of work. Yet, reading their material, it becomes apparent that the approaches and difficulties of one field are basically similar to those of another.

Improving the effectiveness with which volunteers and professionals work together means strengthening one of the relationships on which the vitality and scope of agency and organizational programs depend.

*Photo by St. Louis Post Dispatch*

THE discussion leader here is Mrs. John Porter, St. Louis housewife. The members of the group are parents of children in Roe School—with a sprinkling of school children too. They have just seen a film, *Children Learn By Experience*, and, with Mrs. Porter's help, are busily discussing the ideas in the film to find out how they apply to their own childrens' learning at home and in school.

# WHO VOLUNTEERS AND WHY?

What keeps volunteers working? Interest in their community, of course, and a sense of responsibility for it. But they would not continue to work month after month, year after year, if the experience were not personally satisfying. It is up to the professional worker to make it so. Whether she succeeds or fails depends primarily on her own personality and attitudes. To work successfully with volunteers, certain qualities are vital: warmth, thoughtfulness, sensitivity, an interest in and concern for people, the ability to identify with them, a genuine respect for their skills and their strengths.

Let's take a few examples.

Mrs. Gordon comes in to report for her first morning's work. She is a little old lady who has recently lost her husband. You know from having talked with her that she feels completely lost, is desperately lonely, is unaccustomed to making decisions, feels she has no skills, is afraid of responsibility. In her place you would approach the morning's work, as she does, with fear and timidity. It is your job to make her feel—what is true—that she is a responsible human being, who has come to

give the most valuable thing she has—her time—to an important cause.

You would introduce her to the other workers, perhaps by indicating that this is Mrs. Gordon's first day, that she lives close to Mrs. Jones, that she has come to help get the newsletter out. The explanation to Mrs. Gordon about the work itself, which is necessarily routine, would embody in it the relationship of that work to the program, so that Mrs. Gordon may see the value of her job in its true perspective. She is not just folding pages of paper. She is making it possible for the people in the community to learn what is going on. Here she is one of a company of people who are sharing in the same effort —the writers of the newsletter, the volunteer who cut the stencils, the people who made the news, those who ran the sheets off on the mimeograph machine, the volunteers who will address and stamp and mail them. The feeling of having a job to do, the sense of belonging, begins.

At 10 a.m., the coffee hour, everybody is ready for a slight break and conversation, including Mrs. Gordon. She is getting used to her job; it goes faster now; she wants to learn more about what the others are doing. By lunch time she seems to be part of the regular staff. Would Mrs. Gordon like to join Mrs. Jones and the secretary, who are sending out for sandwiches, or would she prefer to go out to a restaurant with Mrs. Smith and the file clerk? In either case, she has become a member of the group and feels her acceptance.

On her next work day, Mrs. Gordon may be given another phase of the newsletter job to do. As time goes on, you will learn the things about her that you can count on—her punctuality, her strong sense of responsibility, her inability to do a shoddy job, her quickness in learning. As she succeeds in one task after another, her willingness to tackle new jobs will grow; her potential strengths, unused before, will have a chance to develop. Within a few months Mrs. Gordon may be in charge of the corps of people who get the newsletter out.

The next volunteer may be completely different. He is Mr. Wallace, an architect, an exceedingly able one with a justifiably high opinion of his ability. He is a very busy man—much too busy to fritter away his time he points out—but he does feel a sense of obligation to his com-

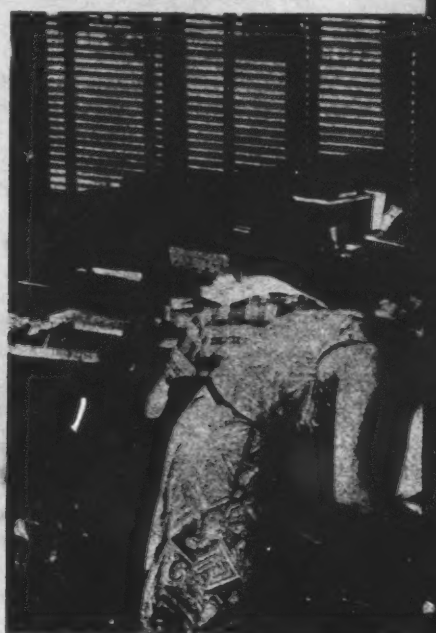
munity and wants to help in any way he can. A sensitive professional will know that this is not a man to put on a committee, that he is not at his best as part of a team. Instead, in an advisory capacity, Mr. Wallace will be called on when there is a specific job to do; he will be performing an exceedingly valuable service, and he should be made to feel its importance to the purposes of the organization.

Suppose your next volunteer is Mrs. Krock, a top-flight secretary before her marriage. Motherhood has made it impossible for her to continue her working career. She is not at her best as a housekeeper, feels dissatisfied and frustrated. She needs an outlet for her skills, and your organization needs her abilities. You make arrangements for Mrs. Krock to come in daily for dictation, when she is out shopping. This is work which can be transcribed at home and returned the next day at the time of the baby's outing. Mrs. Krock's letters turn out to be masterpieces of accuracy and beautiful typing. You let her know of your enthusiasm for her work. As the weeks pass, and she takes on different kinds of secretarial work, you find that she has a creative, searching spirit and a gift for organization and administration. You have administrative and organizational problems. Share them with her. Encourage her to develop new and more effective systems of operation. Ideas can be developed at home.

Mr. Jackson presents a different problem. He works at a job he dislikes because family responsibilities make it impossible for him to break away and start afresh at a smaller salary. He seems to be a thoughtful, clear-thinking, objective person. He likes people and wants to be useful, but he hasn't any special skills and has no time during the day. He thinks well of the idea of block organization through which neighbors work together to solve the problems common to their blocks. He even points out a number of problems on his own block that cry out for activity. But he doesn't think of himself as a leader. "You get someone else to start a block organization," he says, "and I'll help out." You believe that he does have leadership qualities, but you don't argue. Instead you ask whether he would consider getting a few of his neighbors together in his home to discuss the problems of the block. After an evening's discussion, they

decide to have a general block meeting, at which Mr. Jackson is made a member of the steering committee. As the block group develops and carries out a number of projects, Mr. Jackson's qualities of leadership become increasingly evident. He establishes himself as the finest type of leader—one who stimulates others and brings out the potentiality for leadership in them rather than one who does all the work himself. Mr. Jackson is selected to represent his block at the monthly meetings of all block leaders, and eventually becomes a member of the Board of Directors.

In one way or another, these people have found satisfaction in their work as volunteers. They have made important contributions to a cause they believed in, and the value of their contribution has been recognized. It is not necessary to worry about tricks or gimmicks to keep them interested and involved. They *are* involved because they are a part of something bigger than themselves,



**Housewives pitch in to office jobs at the Hyde Park-Kenwood Community Conference**

something in which they are needed and wanted, and which has encouraged their growth and development.

The *form* of involvement will differ in different organizations—hospitals, mental institutions, social work agencies. The *type of personal growth* will differ, too—it may be growth in dealing with people, in the patience and compassion that come with understanding, rather than in the development of leadership qualities or specific skills and procedures. The principles, however, remain the same.

Of course there will be failures with volunteers. In every such case, a skilled professional will know the reason. Perhaps she has been too pressed with other responsibilities to give the necessary time to this work; it is not always possible to assign tasks that permit growth and are at the same time within the competence of the volunteer; she has been irritable and impatient; the personality problems of the volunteer are too serious for her to handle.

It is difficult to lay out a specific set of instructions on how to work with volunteers: what to say to them when they telephone; what to say when you pass their desks; how you greet them; how you express thanks and appreciation; what words you use in establishing communication between them and other volunteers or between them and the staff; what you can say that will make them feel happy and useful.

Even if instructions of that kind were possible, they would be worse than useless. It is impossible to build any kind of worthwhile relationship on insincerity and affectation. If you are honestly interested in people, if you are sensitive enough to put yourself in their place, you will say the right thing. What do you say, for example, when a friend has had good news—there is a new baby in the family, she is going off to Hawaii, her sister has come for a visit? You are genuinely happy about it because she is. It doesn't matter what words you use to say so—the feeling will come through. So it is with volunteers.

There are, however, a few general principles by which a professional can be guided.

(1) *Continued participation depends upon reward.* Rewards vary with volunteers. They may be concerned with self-expression, recognition, the need to feel useful and important, the desire for new knowledge, with the need to meet new people, the feeling that leisure time is used for social ends, a desire to meet unmet community needs.

(2) *Volunteers must see the relationship of the job they do, however small, to the total effort.* It is unquestionably boring to type cards for a file. It becomes important when the volunteer knows how the cards are to be used, when she realizes that her work will make it possible for everyone involved in the organization to have immediate access to a record of people who can be called upon for various kinds of essential work. And even in the most routine job, the volunteer can be given an opportunity to consider various ways of doing it.

(3) *Volunteers must be made to feel the importance of their contribution.* What exactly does the volunteer's work mean? Has it provided a service otherwise impossible? Has it opened the way for others to give their

time and talents? Has it resulted in improvement to the community—what kind and in what way? Has it saved the organization money, or released funds for essential uses? The volunteer has a right to know what her contribution means to the organization, and the professional has an obligation to tell her.

(4) *The first efforts of a volunteer must be simple enough to insure success.* A little success goes a long way in maintaining interest. The jobs people are given to do must be within their skill and experience. Frustration at the outset is death to the efforts of volunteers. Small successes will lead them from one job to another.

(5) *Volunteers must have opportunities to grow and learn.* Interest stops when there is stagnation. People are unwilling to do the same jobs over and over again. Continued involvement demands new challenges, the provision of opportunities to try new methods and new skills, the kind of supervision that broadens horizons, the development of potentialities for growth and leadership.

(6) *Volunteers must be encouraged to make as many decisions as possible.* Growth is shown by the capacity to make intelligent decisions. One of the hardest jobs of a professional in an organization of volunteers (particu'arly in a democratic, citizens' organization) is to refrain from making all the decisions. It may be simpler to do so, but it is frequently wiser and healthier for the organization to allow volunteers to do it. There is a very fine balance between knowing when to step in and when to remain on the sidelines. It has been our experience that people can be trusted to act with maturity if you treat them like responsible human beings; if you give them the facts and a sense of direction about agency policy and programs, they will more often than not make intelligent decisions.

(7) *Volunteers work best in a friendly, warm atmosphere, where their efforts are obviously needed and appreciated.* The professional can create such an atmosphere by her own attitude, by seeing that the volunteer is made to feel part of the working family, by expressing appreciation when it is deserved, by treating each volunteer as an individual human being, by remembering the small, thoughtful things that make each person feel a

special individual.

(8) *Volunteers must not be taken for granted.* They do not owe you or the organization anything. They might be doing any number of things for pleasure or profit. Instead they have chosen to spend their time performing a service. That service undoubtedly gives them satisfaction, or they would not have made such a choice. But your appreciation of the things they may have given up to perform it and your recognition of its value should be none the less real. Express that appreciation at the time the service is performed, and periodically in the form of a note or some other form of recognition that stresses the meaning and value of the service.

(9) *Keep volunteers informed about developments in the organization,* whether or not they are directly related to their work. The people who work for an organization are sincerely interested in what happens to it. They will feel more intimately involved if they share with the staff knowledge of the problems and crises as well as the new programs.

(10) *Care enough about volunteers to learn about their strengths.* All people have strengths, although some are so humble and modest that they do not recognize them. It is up to the professional to unearth them and put them to use. In doing so she will render an invaluable service to another human being and release unsuspected gifts in the service of the cause for which they both work.

If you, as a professional, are guided by these principles, if you are warmly concerned about people and sensitive to their feelings, if you try to put yourself in the place of every volunteer with whom you work—you won't have to worry about what to say and do. You'll know, and your volunteers will keep working. ◇◇

# HOW SOME FIND TIME TO VOLUNTEER

MORE than 14,000 St. Louis citizens have discussed problems of mental health over the last four years with the help of volunteer discussion leaders who are citizens of St. Louis too.

These discussion leaders have spent long weeks in training themselves in order to help organizations in the St. Louis community deal with parent-child relationships.

ADULT LEADERSHIP was interested to learn why these St. Louis volunteers were able and willing to make such generous contributions of time and effort to this thriving program of community education. What moved these busy people to get into the program in the first place? How did they find the time for training and community service? What values did they receive from the program which kept them going, kept them asking for more training and more assignments? After a dinner at which over thirty volunteer leaders were guests of ADULT LEADERSHIP, they responded to our questions along these lines as lavishly as they have been responding to the demands of the community program.

E. L. Brashear, E. T. Kenney, A. D. Buchmuller, and M. C. Gildea of the Mental Health Association have described the St. Louis Community Program of Mental Health Education in these words, "Briefly, the program comprises the use of volunteer discussion leaders, trained in discussion techniques by professional personnel, using a work-shop method of training. After this training they are on call to meet with parent or other groups in the community to discuss the various aspects of parent-child relationships. Audio-visual tools, films, plays and structured socio-drama are used as the devices around which discussion is centered. The volunteer serves as a group leader, not an authority, and is responsible only for the

discussion, not the content. The leader introduces the film (or play) and its subject, encourages the discussion which follows, stimulates participation, and ends with a brief summary of the various points which the discussion has brought out."

As the Mental Health Association sees it, "the uniqueness of the program (lies) . . . in the fact that it is a mental health program, led by lay persons, for lay persons. This is a field which in the past has been considered sacred to the professionals."

These busy volunteer leaders reported a number of reasons for joining the Community Education Program in the first place. Some came in looking for help in their personal lives. The appeal of a novel program and the challenge of its work were primary attractions to others. Still others responded to the call as an opportunity for community service. Most people were probably moved by more than one of these considerations.

Let's see more concretely what some of the motives were. Frank Proctor, manufacturer, reported that he and his wife, Virginia, had found help with family problems at earlier meetings. "Both of us felt we had received so much from the two meetings at the nursery school, we were glad to join the work-shop group to see if it would help us along the same lines. I believe our prime motive was a selfish one. We wanted help in dealing with problems of our own children." A number of other parents among the leaders agreed that Mr. Proctor had spoken for them also.

Edna Brooks, a public welfare worker with the Board of Education, found the promise of help with skills useful in her work a strong motive for joining up. "I felt that it would be helpful to me in my work, which is preventive mental health for pupils in the public schools. I thought the discussion technique would be helpful to me in my work with parents and I have found that it is."

One half of the leaders agreed that the program had attracted them for the reason expressed by Pat Youngdahl, housewife. "I felt that this particular organization (the Mental Health Association) was doing a most creative job in community education and that its program was most rewarding in terms of new ideas in parent education." The challenge of the organization's work had

also brought in William Stix, attorney. "I got into the training workshop because I've been a member of the board of the organization and I knew what it was doing but didn't really have a chance to participate in its work. It seems to me that participation is really the key to the success of an organization with volunteers. . . . I'm still a member of the board but I don't always go to meetings because I do the leader work in preference. I get a big kick out of this . . ."

Mrs. Edwin J. Putzell, housewife, spoke of the program as an opportunity for community service. "A long time ago when I was completely bogged down with two young children and a lame back, I was urged by a friend of mine to do something for the community. I said I certainly would as soon as I was free to. But I was frank to say it would have to be sufficiently absorbing that I could make that extra push in terms of energy, because those things cost me something physically. The Mental Health Association work—the group discussion leading which is the part that I do—fills the bill completely. The satisfactions in helping are worth every bit of effort it takes to get to the meetings or the training workshops or whatever. And it is something I *can* do too." Mrs. Theo Haimann, housewife, expressed the urge to community service, which many others shared, in special terms. "From the time I was in college and the world started to blow up in our faces, I wondered like everyone else what I could do to help and was pretty frustrated. I decided if you start with the kids maybe you can make better people and a better world so I wanted to be a school teacher. Well, I got married and I couldn't do that. Then we had more social troubles in the world and I still think the solution lies in finding better ways of dealing with the mental health of children and other people too. When you start with the mental health of children, through their parents and teachers, you get to the cause."

## barriers to be overcome

The experienced leaders can laugh now about the barriers they had to overcome in meeting the demands which their participation once put upon their time and energy. But many confessed that these difficulties had

seemed pretty important at the time.

Most of them didn't believe the chief difficulties actually lay in making time in their schedules. The problem of time lay first of all in deciding that the work is important enough to do. As Marjorie Lasser, housewife, said it—"I think you have to make up your mind about the importance of things and then put first things first. I think we all had to weed out other things that we were doing that were less important and that we no longer had time for." Part of the answer seems to lie also in better organization of work in order to make time. Mrs. Alex Kaplan, housewife, put it this way, and many others agreed—"Readers of ADULT LEADERSHIP may wonder, like a lot of my friends did—when do these gals do their laundry? We do our laundry by becoming better organized and eliminating non-essentials."

If time as such doesn't present major obstacles to those who want to do volunteer work, where do the greater difficulties come in? For these St. Louis volunteers, the answer lay in the strain which the new activities put upon their human relationships—it might have been with their children, their husbands or wives, their friends. But let's let them tell in their own words what the difficulties were and how they worked out solutions.

And let's begin with the problem of the relationships of the volunteer, who is also a parent, to his or her children. Frank Proctor put the problem this way for himself and his wife. "Our main problem as a couple going out together (for discussion leadership) was that we sometimes wondered what we were doing. Here we were trying to help the parents of other children, yet at times our own children would ask, 'Are you going out again, mommy and daddy?' Our answer to that came to be that when one of us went out the other stayed at home so that the children wouldn't be neglected."

Doris Bryan, housewife and mother, voiced a similar solution to this problem and added another consideration. "I found the time away from my own children was valuable to me and to them because it gave me new insights, new ways of looking into their problems and into my problems with them."



Mrs. Milton Spitz, housewife, pointed to another

advantage to children in having a mother working as an adult leader. "My children take pride in my activity, a pride not only in the fact that I'm a doing person but in the fact they can say that their mother does so-and-so." Most of these St. Louis volunteers who are also parents agreed with Mrs. Bryan and Mrs. Spitz that being an active civic leader, at least in their kind of work, and being a good parent should not be opposed. Rather they go hand in hand.

Some of the people present reported that their husbands or wives had at first resented the amount of time they gave to the association. Several agreed that the solution to the problem of resistance from a husband or wife was to "get them interested in the program. If you can't get them into the program themselves, get them interested in backing your participation in it." The large number of enthusiastic husband-wife teams among the St. Louis leaders is evidence of the effectiveness of this solution.

Participation also put strains on other relationships. Mrs. Putzell found some lack of understanding among her bridge-playing friends. Mrs. Haimann reported that "when my husband mentioned that I went to mental health meetings, some of his associates asked if I didn't feel well." On the other side, Mrs. Danysh reported what many others seemed also to feel about their training and work together. "If you lose some friends and social life by joining, you gain others that are even more rewarding."

Nearly everyone seemed to feel that an early barrier to work in the program was stage fright at the prospect of leading a group of people. Mrs. Kaplan reported that "it seems to be dissipated by practice." Many complimented the actual practice in discussion leadership, which the training program provided, as a big help in overcoming this obstacle. Others mentioned the value of sending out discussion leaders in pairs on early assignments. Audrey Senturia, housewife, pointed to another aid the training group had given her as novice leader. "You start on the same basis as others. You feel you can do it too."

## the rewards of leadership

These volunteer leaders had come into the program looking for certain rewards and satisfactions. They seem

to have found these and, as they worked in the program, they have discovered new, bonus values which they had not expected at the beginning. These values in the work have motivated them to overcome obstacles to their participation and encouraged them to take a growing interest in the program. The associations of many of these volunteer leaders in their work have led to a clearer intellectual perspective on problems of parenthood and citizenship, according to Mrs. Jack Jacobs. Others, like Mrs. Danysh, discovered a more satisfying social life in the work of the association. "It's not all work. You have time for coffee and dinner once in a while."

One of the pleasant surprises to many of these volunteers came as they found that the knowledge and skills they learned in their training and leadership were helping them in other working relationships as well. Ernest Stix, one of the few bachelors in the group, mentioned the values of a better understanding of the group discussion process he had acquired. "I've carried over my skill in discussion methods to another voluntary group with an interest quite different from mental health and I have used it increasingly in employment situations in which I'm involved." Mrs. Brooks of the public schools "found an opportunity to use the group technique which we practice here in working with parents of children who were drop outs."

The transfer of learning from the program wasn't limited to work situations. Mrs. Putzell found herself behaving differently as chairman of committees in other areas. "I wasn't aware of the fact that I was employing group discussion techniques in being a chairman until three or four members of the committee who are pretty outstanding in the field of social work here came up to me after our last meeting and said they hadn't found another committee chairman in the social planning council so effective in stimulating discussion by the whole committee. I thought—well, that's thanks to what I've learned in the MHA program."

## how the Association helped

These enthusiastic volunteers felt quite sure that the important satisfactions they had received from the pro-

gram were due in some large part to the attitudes, policy and program of the Mental Health Association which had got them into it and had seen them through. Prominent in their praise of the association was their respect for the training which the association had provided. Ernest Stix stressed the importance of the philosophy of this training. "It was a sort of low pressure training, I'd say. We weren't supposed to be authorities in dealing with other people. We were supposed to help them do a better job of thinking and discussing. And our training leaders treated us the same way. We went out with a healthy attitude to meet our groups."

They liked the fact that the association had provided continued training after their initial workshop experience. Alice Chasnoff, housewife, stated it this way. "Our workshop was very successful. After our initial work outside, we decided that a once-a-month review workshop would be a very good idea. So we have continued to meet to talk over our experiences in discussion leading and to use more films and skits and I find it very, very helpful." Virginia Proctor spoke enthusiastically about the continuing training sessions. "I think they're even more than review sessions. As we've continued, we've learned new approaches to use in what we're doing—trying out role playing and other techniques that go beyond regular discussion method."

One thing the volunteers liked was that they received independent evaluations of the meetings they had led. The association has arranged to have Mrs. Rose Randall, housewife, whose family situation doesn't permit her to accept many leadership assignments, telephone officers and program chairman of every group using their discussion leaders. Mrs. Randall does this the morning after the meeting. The evaluation results are made available to the leaders themselves. Mrs. Randall enjoys this work. "I don't want to make any sweeping statements but the community is enthusiastic about the program, though I tell them they don't have to be polite because we really want their frank answers," she says. The volunteers have found these evaluations of their work helpful rather than threatening.

Mrs. John Porter, housewife and board member of

the association, spoke a tribute to the volunteer leaders. "This devoted group of workshop people, who have pitched in and have worked so hard, haven't just taken and worked a program they found ready made. They have brought it up from very small and vague beginnings to an exciting community project." But the volunteers were quick to turn Mrs. Porter's tribute to them into a tribute to the association. As Mrs. Milton Spitz put it—"We've never had to follow any set pattern of leadership, even in our training. We were all subject to the guidance of the leader of the training, Mr. Buchmueller. But I think we all felt, even in our workshop, that we were trying out new methods, experimenting with them and really trying to find out what will and what won't make a successful program. Everything isn't black or white, right or wrong. What is effective for one may not be effective for another. So we always had a chance for creativity."

## creative volunteers

ADULT LEADERSHIP feels that it has learned something about creative volunteering from the enthusiastic, devoted and intelligent leaders in the St. Louis Community Education Program. The association set a challenging job for their volunteers. They were asked not to come into a cut-and-dried program but to come in to help shape the program and work it out. And, within the limits of the leadership task, they were free to experiment, to create, to grow. Yet the limits of the task were defined—they were not asked to become professional authorities in mental health in a few short weeks. They were asked to become more understanding and skilled laymen in helping other laymen discuss and think about home and school relationships. The task they were asked to do tapped deep personal motivations in the volunteers, and training was provided—training which gave opportunity for practice in group leadership with friendly and objective evaluation by a workshop group of peers. Nor did the training stop with preparation for the task. It continued, so that new problems could be solved, new methods practiced and learned. The volunteers felt that they were growing with a developing program—a program they themselves were helping to create. ◇◇

# THE ROLE OF THE RECRUITING AGENCY

THERE are any number of more-or-less valid reasons for an agency to be wanting volunteers. Maybe some kind people "want to help" and the agency hopes to keep their friendship. Maybe future careerists want a chance to test out a job and the agency is sympathetic. (But there is always the danger of making it easy for a volunteer to slip into a professional job without the necessary training for a career.) Maybe the agency needs to save money, but volunteer aid isn't all for free.

There are stronger reasons for wanting volunteers, though . . .

Some agencies say, "Volunteers should always be a luxury." They want volunteers to give a service that couldn't be considered as part of the agency's regular work. *They see volunteers as enriching their program but never actually carrying on the program—and that is a very good reason indeed.*

Friendly visiting, for example, is not an aspect of casework. It is something extra, good in itself, which originated in the deep desire of sympathetic case workers to have more attention given to lonesome clients. Extra services performed by volunteers is a "plus" program, and very often public agencies, to safeguard the employment of adequate personnel, insist that this should be the only type of volunteer service in an agency.

Other agencies think of volunteers as enablers, helping the staff in the regular job of the agency. They are likely to say, "Volunteers should supplement, but never supplant, the services of paid staff." *Volunteers can take*

*over some of the work that would ordinarily be carried by the professional staff, thus releasing valuable time for the worker to spend on the more skilled aspects of the job. That again is a good reason for volunteers.*

"We must have volunteers as workers," other agencies say. "We couldn't do our job without them. They aren't extra hands but the real workers of the agency." This is the position taken by agencies, like the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, that have lay leaders for their troops and only a small number of professional staff members. This is the reason, too, for large numbers of volunteers in an agency in times of emergency—war, depressions, or disasters—when volunteers fill a temporary need. *When volunteers are in fact the staff and the core of program they are of course indispensable, but the agency must do a highly skilled job in administering the program.*

## interview each person

Interviewing the volunteers and making particular assignments are the responsibility of the agency, no matter who else is involved. Some of the traditional distrust of volunteers may well have come from requisitioning volunteers en masse through another organization and not sorting them out at the agency itself for skills, interests and even potential compatibility to staff.

One difficulty in the selection interview is caused by recruitment methods. Some agencies recruit almost entirely through interested auxiliaries. They may even have a horror of getting volunteers off-the-street, feeling that personal acquaintance is necessary. But, volunteer bureaus have demonstrated that all sorts of fine people, unattached to groups, can be attracted through general newspaper and radio appeals.

Another difficulty often arises when an agency is reluctant to reject a person who has been solicited through an outside group. And still another arises when the volunteer can be offered only certain jobs, if the pleasantest and most intriguing jobs are reserved for members of a special group. Something happens to public relations when a serious-minded, capable volunteer is turned down because he is unaffiliated, and so unwanted.

The interview is a time to begin the orientation of the volunteer: to the agency—its aims and history and

what it does—to the volunteer program and how it fits in; and to the special field in which the volunteer will serve. For example, he needs to know about the whole field of health and welfare, group work, child care and family service and to have some understanding of community organization.

Agencies have differing ideas about orientation. One gives a measured dose in the first interview, and that's that. Perhaps there is a tour with introductions to the staff or, more to the good, with informative chats with department folk. Yearly orientation sessions, lectures and discussions on various aspects of the agency services, volunteer manuals—all may help.

## define the job

Whatever place volunteers hold in a program, their jobs need to be carefully and imaginatively planned. Ideas about jobs must be concrete and clearly defined, not sketchy. A nurses' aide is not just someone who is to help the nurse. Is she to bathe patients? Make beds? Take temperatures, pulse and respiration rates? Feed patients, and wash their faces? Or is there a paid nurses' aide already on duty? If so, then what is the volunteer aide to do besides fix flowers and fill water pitchers? Details of the volunteer job need to be planned. Sometimes it is helpful to try out a job on a pilot study basis, getting ideas from both staff and volunteers on specific duties, and writing down a permanent job description only after this trial period.

Once a job has been defined, who is going to do it? In the course of planning specific duties, ideas will develop about the qualifications the volunteer needs to have. What educational background does the job require? Or skills? Or personal attributes? And what health tests must be required? What days and hours are volunteers needed and how many of them?

Jobs for volunteers should be worth doing, needed, not too boring, and in line with the aims of the agency. They also should be jobs for which there is some prospect of getting volunteers. There is no use setting up impossible qualifications. In planning jobs for volunteers, agencies might well consider how to allow room for some initiative on the part of volunteers. The term *volunteer*

implies starting off on one's own, and the early pioneers in the volunteer movement were all self-starters. Initiative is worth having.

## welcome volunteers

Volunteers need to be accepted to do a good job. They need to feel that they have a genuine place in the scheme of things and that they are respected. There is no problem of staff attitude where a program has been going long enough to prove its worth. But there are situations where the administrator wants a volunteer program before the staff is ready. A state hospital superintendent may go so far in a situation of this sort as to employ a director of volunteers and make it the director's first job to interest the nursing staff or occupational therapist or social service workers in volunteers. If the administrator is wise, volunteer service will be developed only in the departments that want them.

Staff members may be reluctant to accept volunteers for a number of reasons. Some of them may feel that their job security is threatened. The staff as a whole may never have been stimulated to think about volunteer service—the why of it, or the how of it as relating profitably to their own jobs. Volunteers may be already serving and be doing important work, but without what the staff feel is adequate training. Worse yet, staff members may look upon volunteers as doing unimportant work without a serious purpose and without a sense of relationship to the staff people they meet. Or staff members may be so immersed in their own jobs that they are not community-minded and they may be much too busy, quite truly, to take on unpaid assistants.

To maintain the status of volunteers in any agency, the whole staff needs some orientation to the volunteer program and new staff members should be briefed about it as they come on the job.

The staff needs to face up to the problem of turnover, too, and to take upon themselves responsibility for continuous training and for supervision that will bring out the best in a volunteer. Of course volunteers drop out —family affairs come first and volunteer service is an extra activity. Repeat training courses to obtain more volunteers will help. So will some appreciation of supervision as an art. Supervision doesn't imply taking out of

a volunteer all of his bounce and initiative. A good supervisor will help a volunteer to make the most of his abilities and will respect his intelligence.

## take the responsibility

"One big happy family" means no divided authority, no interfering grandparents, no unwanted stepchildren. Wise parents make opportunity for the growth and development of each member of the family. A good start on a coordinated volunteer program is made when everyone—the agency executive, the volunteer committee, and the volunteers—mutually agree that the real sponsor for the work of the volunteer must rightly be the agency.

It is not always so. For ten years a delightful lady, now in her eighties, has been doing friendly visiting on a ward and developing a program of activities for the patients. Only recently has the hospital administration become aware of her activities and the regular departments are now taking over and further developing these activities.

In another hospital a new personnel director was given responsibility for volunteers, but the reactivated volunteer committee of the women's board had no official relationship to the volunteer department. What comes next?

A third hospital gave the volunteer chairman office space, and, without consulting the staff, she began a vigorous campaign to secure volunteers. Trouble was inevitable.

On the other hand, the American Red Cross has done an excellent job for the Veterans Administration in recruiting, screening, and training nurses aides and Gray Ladies for veterans' hospitals. The success of the program, we might venture, is because of a partnership in which the Veterans Administration staff is fully responsible for all volunteer service in the hospitals and has clearly defined the supplementary service of the outside cooperating agency.

Voluntary groups can be of immeasurable benefit to an agency by interesting their membership in undertaking serious volunteer work. *But woe to the agency that leaves the whole job, and the entire responsibility to others.* ◇◇

# PLACEMENT

THE quality of volunteer service and the setting of standards begin with the placement interview. How useful a placement person is may best be measured by how successful she is in discovering which of the available job opportunities will be most suited to a volunteer's capabilities and interests, and by her skill in interpreting the philosophy of volunteer service.

Let's consider a few sample interviews. What happens, for instance, when a volunteer worker's initial request for a job cannot be filled?

Applicant A, we'll say, arrives out of breath. She knows precisely what she wants to do and has come to this central placement office simply "to go through proper channels." Her burning desire is to man an information and service desk in a railroad station—a job she handled for more than a year before her marriage. The interviewer dislikes applying the brakes to this real enthusiasm and drive, but she has no choice. In the information-gathering part of the interview, Mrs. A. reveals that she has three children, only one of school age, an elderly aunt in attendance, and no other family nearby. Women with preschool children are seldom placed in this type of job. The factors of sudden illness and the dependence on irregular help to care for small children during a mother's absence make for a disproportionately high "casualty" list among volunteers in this group. Since this volunteer job was an isolated one, there was never another volunteer nearby who could even partially cover the work until a substitute arrived.

Although the interviewer tried to present the information deftly, it seemed deflating to this young mother. Further discussion eased the blow somewhat and then the interviewer settled down to find out a bit more about the applicant. She had enjoyed her previous job because, as she said: "I could use my head and be with people at the same time." This was the first positive clue as to the kind of job she would enjoy, although she had been quite forthright in stating that she was not anxious to work with children on her "day-off."



An opening in an organization which concerns itself

with international relations was suggested and at first seemed appealing. However, when the volunteer realized that part of the job involved filing, handling mass mailings, and typing, she firmly declined. The interviewer suggested a job in a geriatric center; that was not interesting either. Next came the suggestion of a job in a university--helping a staff member assemble specimens to illustrate a book he was writing. Although mentally stimulating, that job was turned down when Mrs. A realized that much of her time would be spent working alone.

Finally Mrs. A told the interviewer that aside from working in an office, she had been an unofficial assistant to one of the members of a personnel staff. The interviewer then described a job in an Epilepsy Clinic where volunteers were especially trained to interview patients' families and write up that phase of the patients' total history. Because there was little office work but much chance for companionship, Mrs. A was eager to try out this job and she left the office anxious to get started in the new venture. Now, let's interpret some of what went on in this interview.

Once it became evident that the applicant's initial request could not be filled, the interviewer began to delve into the volunteer's background, capabilities, and job preferences. She was apparently so eager to compensate for Mrs. A's original disappointment, though, that she was far from thorough. She began offering volunteer jobs before she had a sound basis for selecting an appropriate one. After three negative responses, a wise interviewer would pause, size-up the situation, and recognizing her dearth of information, attempt to find out more. In this interview, the applicant took the initiative in developing the conversation so that the interviewer was able to place her well.

Shall we document further? Consider Applicant B, a middle-aged housewife who indicates that she would "sort of like to work for the Red Cross." During the conversation the interviewer has discovered that Mrs. B enjoys young people, hates hospitals, plays the piano, would enjoy wearing a uniform, was chairman of a Bible study group in her office before marriage, has a son in the Navy and could work any one of three afternoons a week or on Wednesday evenings. Since Mrs. B has suggested a par-

ticular agency—the Red Cross—the interviewer reviews the job openings in that agency.

As Mrs. B talks, it turns out that she really wants to work with servicemen in some sort of entertainment or social capacity, and that she had assumed this meant a Red Cross job. In her particular community, the Service Men's Center is operated by the U.S.O. It was a natural transition to discuss jobs in that agency. Mrs. B's interview concluded with a cordial word or two and an assurance that the new experience would be a pleasant one.

Let's cite one more, Applicant C, a younger woman, somewhere in the mid-thirties. She is attractive, rather intense, well educated. She has no children, runs her own house and carries a part-time job two days a week. She's interested in puppetry, and at one time used to "make puppets to sell." She expresses a desire to work with children because she "likes them." Further conversation brings out that she once began a volunteer job in a hospital orphanage, but was so distraught because the children had so little love and affection that she could not go back to that kind of job. Beyond feeling vaguely that she should "be doing something worthwhile," she wasn't definite about her reasons for wanting to do volunteer work, and the issue was not pressed.

Gradually the interviewer began to suspect that this woman was in some way searching for an outlet she seemed to lack in her childless marriage. As Mrs. C continued to talk, the interviewer desperately tried to think of some job which would involve children in a way that would make the job satisfying, but would not bring the volunteer into too close association with them.

There was a Saturday morning program at the museum for children and she knew that the director hoped some day to include an occasional puppet show. When she suggested this opening, Mrs. C's first reaction was one of real pleasure. Then she began to waver since the job was on Saturday morning. The interviewer pointed out these facts: openings for work with children within the requirements Mrs. C had set up were, at the moment, limited; the museum was near her home; her share of the program would probably be presented not oftener

than once a month. Mrs. C began to reconsider and finally decided to see the museum director and another volunteer was on her way to an interesting job.

It does not seem necessary to document further—nor to include sample interviews done by any individual agency. The interviewer in an agency goes beyond the scope of the interviewer in a large placement center. She begins the volunteer's orientation, often outlines her training program, makes very clear the peculiar regulations of the organization, explains its purpose and its overall volunteer program. She usually introduces the volunteer to the staff member who will supervise her work.

## the placement director

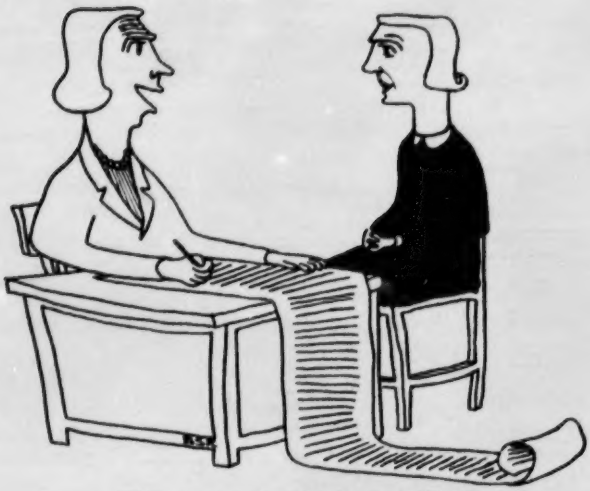
The agency interview is, usually, a highly personalized contact from the beginning and has one aspect of particular value: the possibility of regular contact with the volunteer after she has begun her job. A placement director should plan for regular conferences with all volunteers; she should see new ones after their training is completed and then every three or four months after they have taken on their assignment. The more seasoned volunteer should have a minimum of one conference yearly to evaluate her work from the standpoint of service to the organization and of personal growth. One of the pitfalls of volunteer programs is an acceptance of the status-quo. It is easy for a placement director and her volunteers to let a mutually satisfying placement ride endlessly, when an objective discussion of the job might be helpful both to the agency and to the volunteer.

Now a word about the personality and responsibilities of the placement person. Whether she is a professional or a volunteer, the criteria against which she is measured are many. She should be mature and interested in people. She must believe in the highest standards of volunteer service and recognize that she is a key person in maintaining those standards. She must know the fields into which she is directing volunteers. This is not too much of a burden for someone handling placement in a small agency or institution, but it becomes a mighty task for the person doing interviews for a large agency or for an organization which places volunteers throughout a community. There are several tools for acquiring this vital

knowledge: reading all available material on a given agency, talking with volunteers who have worked there, meeting with the professional staff, and, ideally, visiting the organizations to which she is directing volunteers.

The placement person should have the further qualifications of tact, perceptiveness, tolerance. She should be patient but firm. Her patience is often strained as the applicant meanders verbally, striving to clarify motives, to enumerate her special talents and, in general, to identify herself as a particular human being. This outpouring can be a fruitful phase of the appointment when an interviewer is sufficiently astute to garner facts from frills. When she has reached this point, her talent for firmness must be deftly exercised lest the interview deteriorate into an aimless soliloquy.

Some thought should be expended on the setting of the interview. The atmosphere needs to be business-like, but friendly; there should be privacy, a minimum of interruptions, and there should be no feeling that the



30 *"Now just a few simple questions."*

interviewer is being pressed for time.

The first step is to establish some rapport with the volunteer—and this is never achieved by a deluge of fact-finding questions! Perhaps the most helpful entree is the seemingly casual but well conceived remark which should elicit a reply. Once some feeling of ease and lack of tension is established, it is relatively simple to continue the conversation, directing it as needed and gleaning every possible clue about the person who has come seeking a job.

This phase of the interview can often be most easily handled when the interviewer explains why she must have certain data. In the course of the conversation some rather substantial information about volunteer work is given the new volunteer. Actually, an applicant's reactions to facts and philosophies as presented by the interviewer are frequently more enlightening than the original "self portrait," and can be of inestimable value in determining which job the person should have.

It is extremely important that the interviewer accept people for what they are—realizing that limited formal education, lack of experience, unmet emotional needs, uncertainty as to a field of service should not work against the applicant. Conversely, a remarkable and urgently needed talent should not so influence the interviewer into over-acceptance.

There are endless jobs in agencies, institutions, and organizations to which the volunteer need bring no particular skill and for which on-the-job training is totally adequate. Sometimes a person who has the drive and the needed attitudes, but seemingly has no tangible talent, makes a better volunteer than the highly skilled applicant. The latter is frequently most generous with her particular gift or craft, but is sometimes evasive as to her acceptance of the true concept of volunteer service. When she seems unwilling to take part in any agency training plan, she can be gently yet firmly guided to a point where she recognizes herself as a needed person, yet part of a total program.

The truly well-rounded individual can be a joy to place. So many openings are available where a generally capable person is desperately needed. These jobs prove eminently satisfying to such a person, for they provide an

opportunity for her to use her total capabilities as the job develops and sometimes to discover a potentiality which has lain dormant.

There is a somewhat different type of volunteer, the slap-happy Jack of all trades, who poses a bit more of a problem. She knows she can embark on any volunteer job anywhere and handle anything the job demands. She too must be imbued with the necessity for orientation, training, and acceptance of herself as one segment of the group. She likewise must be alerted to the sober fact that not every skill she presumably commands can be used immediately or in every job. In contrast to her counterpart, she must be made aware of the necessity of doing a given job as directed, yet she should know that enriching or developing her volunteer work is a challenge to be worked out eventually with her volunteer director. Placing a person of this sort is a process of slowing the individual down without, at the same time, stifling her enthusiasm.

A word, perhaps, about records. Records kept by placement interviewers vary little from agency to bureau. Having made a placement, or deferred one, the final responsibility of the interviewer is to write up the interview. Beyond factual information, notes should be brief. In order to avoid any possibility of bias by people who refer to the record at a later date, the interviewer should generalize her impressions and indicate that she has done so. No information which the volunteer classified as confidential should ever be included in the written record.

It becomes evident that broad placement policies are everywhere the same, and begin with the principle that the individual is of primary consideration. The fact that a job very much needs to be filled should never be the determining factor in placing a volunteer. Interviewers can never forget that to take on a volunteer job is a very important decision for the volunteer. This person facing you across your desk is a woman with daily responsibilities—home, business, profession—yet she wishes to participate in community life. She is, therefore, a person making an effort. She comes to you without pressure and it is your responsibility to place her in a job which she will find rewarding. ◇◇

# TRAINING

We can never expect to have a sufficient number of professionally trained leaders to accomplish the objectives we dream of in adult education. And probably we would never wish to lose the advantages of lay or volunteer leadership; for the lay leader is, with rare exception, a member of the group we are trying to serve, and so has a relationship to the other members of the group that is next to impossible for the professional to achieve. We have all too often seen what happens when a professional

***In the training of 4-H club leaders we find:***

New leaders want—

—explanation of their duties as 4-H club leaders
—information about the helps available for doing the job
—training to understand young people better and how to work with them
—ideas about how to develop a recreation program
—personal consultation with the professional leader
—moral support from the trained personnel.

Experienced leaders want—

—training in subject matter
—opportunity to share experiences with other leaders
—help with recreation activities
—help on how to obtain better parent cooperation.

leader tries to be a group leader! Frequently he does many things *for* the group rather than *helping it to help itself*, and as a result the group may fall apart entirely when he leaves. Discovering, motivating, and training lay leaders, therefore, is of great concern to all professional workers.

Preferably, leaders are selected by group members rather than by the professional leader. In an adult group that has had continuing membership over a reasonable length of time members come to recognize each other's special abilities and will call on these as needed. In one home demonstration group, for instance, two of the members were chosen unanimously to serve as leaders in a study of business methods in the home: one had worked in a bank before her marriage, and the other was known to be an especially efficient manager who kept not only household but farm accounts. Both were liked personally by the other group members.

## methods of training

Some methods of training lay leaders that have been found successful include: training schools or conferences, varying in length from one afternoon or evening session to a week or longer; direct assistance from specialists,

***"Frankly dear, I don't think you're cut out for personal contact work."***

personal letters, regular or occasional circular letters; outlines, case studies, and handbooks for leaders.

Professional leaders can often arrange for lay leaders in group work to visit meetings of other groups—groups devoted to the learning of skills, groups trying to solve specific community problems or studying to become better acquainted with literature. The kind of meeting isn't so important. It *is* important that the observer have definite purpose in making his observations and have opportunity to discuss, compare, and evaluate what he saw with others, and to do this under the guidance of a professional leader. He may also be encouraged to assume the role of observer in groups of which he is a member.

Women in Extension groups greatly prefer having two leaders to lead discussion or give demonstrations. Apparently one acts as a supporter of the other so that each has greater confidence in presenting her part of the demonstration or in leading discussion. When there are two leaders, the "new" leader can learn through working with an experienced one.

Acting as an assistant or being a helper to the leader in a discussion or demonstration, serving as vice-president before assuming the duties of president, sitting in on board meetings by virtue of being chairman of an important committee—all these and many other ways of easing a lay person into important leadership positions may be encouraged by the alert professional leader. As a successful home demonstration agent once put it—"everyone in a club can do something. One woman may be too shy to say a word in meetings at first, but she can make the coffee for refreshment. Next she may serve on some committee that requires her to give a report to the group. From such beginnings I've seen women develop to where they could lead discussion in a truly democratic fashion or preside graciously at an achievement day with an audience of 500 or more people."

Constantly the professional leader will need to stimulate lay leaders to look ahead—to consider next steps or "where do we go from here." Good live groups sometimes drop back into apathetic routine ways after having at one time made community history by grappling with some vexing problem or in meeting some pressing need. When this happens the professional leader must try to

answer the question of why the leaders and members of some group were not sensitive to nor seemingly aware of allied or developing problems in their community. It might be that the professional leader didn't sufficiently exercise his leadership—for he too has leadership responsibilities. We have long been taught that a good teacher or leader begins with people where they are—but he must not be content for them to remain there.

## training the professional

Some people feel that apprenticeship or internship is one of the most advantageous ways to train the professional leader who trains lay leaders. Under an apprentice plan, once a novice leader is employed, he is placed with an experienced and successful leader in a real-life situation similar to the one for which he soon will assume responsibility. Under skillful guidance, the professional-in-training has a chance to observe the functioning of an ongoing program. He is gradually introduced into fuller and fuller participation as he gains confidence and skill. He sees the methods about which he has studied put into daily use. He sees the leader with whom he works meet emergencies and unexpected happenings. He begins to appreciate the need for having "more than one string to your bow."

If he has the stuff of which good adult leaders are made, he soon begins to sense the web of relationships that underlie successful lay-professional leadership activities. He can now appreciate to some degree the ever present play of community forces. He begins to see how the lay leaders in his program are committed not only to one group or one activity but are enmeshed in many which may compete for their time and energy.

A period of apprenticeship allows the young professional to learn without endangering a program that may be on too precarious a foundation to allow for trial and error methods. He can thus begin his career with assurance. The success of an apprentice-training program depends on the care with which it is planned and supervised and on the ability and skill, insight, sympathy, and friendliness of the trainer-leader.



It has been said that the Cooperative Extension Serv-

the professional trainer must have

—competence in his field of special knowledge. He must have a thorough understanding of how the various aspects build up the whole and of the significance of its various ramifications. He must be able to build up short and long time objectives and have a sense of its enduring values.

—a knowledge of people, an understanding of how individuals and groups behave and why they are as they are.

—an understanding of the educational process—of how adults learn and of the developmental tasks of life.

—an understanding of the basic beliefs of the American way of life and the philosophy of our form of government and education.

—a knowledge of his specific responsibilities. He must know the policies, the rules, the hopes and aspirations of the groups or institutions of which he is a part. He must know the scope and limitations of the particular phase of education with which he deals.

—the skills of teaching and guidance, skills in communication.

—the skills of improving. No phase of education remains static. He must continually examine and improve his methods.

—the skills of working with people.

ice helps people make of their daily jobs an instrument for education. The daily job of the professional leader can also serve as an instrument for his education if he strives to understand better the people with whom he works, if he tries to analyze the community trends and cross-currents in light of the best sociological and psychological information at his command, and if he continually tries to bring to bear his best theoretical and practical understanding of causes and effects. The best training comes through this integration of experience and understanding. ◇◇

# SUPERVISION

"A good supervisor is one who helps people do the best possible job in terms of what they have to offer."

Pam's husband, general manager of a medium-sized corporation, gave her this sound advice the day she was elected president of a woman's civic organization.

Today, she is having a conference with the newly-elected president. What can she pass on to her successor? How can she interpret this advice to show its rich signficance? In what ways had she herself used it over the past two years of her term?

Basic to any effective work with volunteers is faith in the people with whom you work—the much overworked phrase "belief in the worth of the individual". In volunteer work this ceases to be a phrase—it is a working philosophy. Experience has taught Pam that you can't "phony" this one up. You really have to believe that whatever Jan's committee plans and is willing to do, is not only acceptable, but actually the best thing for the organization. However modest, it's their own, and they are committed to it.

Even if you could have thought up a plan you liked better, you can't carry through all the brilliant ideas yourself. Creativity is not the sole monopoly of the "top brass". You have to believe that when someone else takes on a responsibility to do a job, he will do it the best he can, and his best may be different from yours. Hard though it is to admit, it might even be better.

To be a supervisor of volunteers you must want to build and develop the skills and talents, hopes and aspirations, that have been entrusted to you. The volunteer house built of enthusiasm, training, and individual help won't be blown down by any wolf.

How does this building process start? How does the volunteer supervisor discover the potential of her people? How can she help develop their talents and

skills? How can she help them discover how good they are, and help them build confidence as they go?

Open channels of communication and availability—these were of the essence in a sprawling big city with members living all over it. The use of the regular bulletins had been a big help in announcing what days she would be at the office or at home to receive phone calls or just talk to anyone who wanted to come in. Those first few months in office had consisted very largely of personal interviews with most of the people who were undertaking new jobs, helping the women adjust their time commitments and skills to the jobs, and adjusting the jobs to the women.

Pam remembered some of those talks vividly: The board member whose husband wanted her available to type for him at home when needed, who could not spend as much time at the office as her job required. In that case the conference resulted in a reshuffling of the jobs she was to do so they could be done on an irregular schedule instead of on a set day or two each week.

The board member who broke her leg and wanted to resign was helped by a conference in which a committee was set up to handle the "leg work" (and incidentally, a lot of routine jobs which she had thought could not be done by anyone else) while she continued to use her accumulated experience in the field for planning and coordination. Then there was the press chairman with professional newspaper background who could not get out to meetings because of three pre-school children. Her solution was a regular system of communication with a board member who gave her necessary information for the news releases.

There were several conferences which dealt with money—husbands temporarily out of work, children at college, too high telephone bills. In most cases all that was needed was a clear understanding that excessive expenses would be reimbursed on voucher (within the limits that plague all volunteer organizations); that they could spread their expense by sharing the work with committee members. Sometimes discussion showed ways of using the mails instead of the phone by planning in advance.

The biggest help Pam felt she had rendered these

volunteers was to listen, and let them know that others were in the same boat. There was nothing shameful about having to watch the pennies, and they had important skills and knowledge to offer the organization. They did not need to feel they had to rob the kiddy's piggy bank to finance their activities.

This question of money is an important behind-the-scenes factor in a lot of volunteer problems. What can you offer the volunteer who has earned a living doing office work, accounting, library work, public relations, etc.? The opportunity to do for free what they used to get paid to do? What about the volunteer who "now that the children are in school" has constantly in the back of her mind the tempting thought that she might as well put in those hours on a part-time paying job instead of giving her time and money to volunteer work. What does the volunteer work offer her that compensates for the fact that she has to wait for her husband's income to provide that new rug or exciting vacation instead of going out and earning it herself?

What was it that made them stay with the volunteer jobs? Was it the fact that in volunteer work it was clearly understood that the family came first, and if the children were sick or your husband's vacation came at that time, you just didn't do it? Was it the fact that a volunteer always felt she didn't have to be perfect; that she could "learn on company time"; that in fact she wasn't just giving away services and time and money, but was getting back some pretty tangible rewards—friendship, interesting activities, skills, a feeling of being needed, a feeling of belonging, of participation in something bigger than the family group, in something that she chose to do? All these were part of the picture.

Behind the efforts of every volunteer there was one universal: "I don't *have* to do it—I *want* to do it." A basic element of democracy is that it rests on the consent of the governed, and it is certainly true of a volunteer organization that it is effective only when policies are based on the consent of those who have to carry them out. This is the real difference between supervising the work of a volunteer and a paid worker.

In industry a supervisor can call a meeting to discuss a problem, ask for reports, facts, surveys, with a

reasonable assurance that the people who should come to the meeting will be there, that the reports, facts, surveys will be ready at the time specified.

Volunteers, on the other hand, have to see the relationship of the meeting to their job, the report or survey to the needs of the organization. They have to feel a member of the team, and know what the goals of the whole team are, as well as their own place on it. They need this perspective in order to decide for themselves whether this meeting is necessary to them or this report has any meaning for the total project being undertaken.

A key to the supervising of volunteers is involvement and motivation. People do not long do jobs for which they can see no tangible use, which they cannot see as important. Since holding a job and collecting a pay check are not motivating forces for the volunteer, supervision must count heavily on maintaining not only the "consent of the governed", but their enthusiasm and interest as well.

The "let's have lunch together" or "have a cup of coffee with me tomorrow while the children are in school" approach, the blessed (or infernal) phone, regular communications with those you supervise so that they see the total picture at all times, the informal "how did that meeting go the other night?" or "is your committee all set to go with plans for World Trade Week?": these are not just social gimmicks; they are means of supervising volunteers in the only way acceptable to them. This approach opens the door for a request for help, a discussion of problems, a need for more training, but does not ram it down their throats.

The elected officer of a volunteer organization has status, it is true, but not enough to criticize, boss, check up on, or otherwise make the volunteer feel inferior to he . She is at the top not by the grace of God, nor by appointment from "top management", but because the members of the organization put her there—and let no volunteer officer ever forget it. Passive (or active) resistance sets in almost immediately, and the officer finds herself carrying the jobs alone!

"Help people do the best possible job in terms of what they have to offer."

Pam remembered the lesson she learned the day she had been at Joan's home and one of Joan's committee members brought in a letter she had written to go to an invited speaker. Pam remembered her shocked dismay as she read the totally inadequate missive and her own abortive struggle to find the right words to say "it's awful", without utterly crushing the eager committee member. And how she listened in delight and amazement as Joan invited her assistant to sit down with her and go over it together to make "a few additions and corrections." The two of them discussed the purpose of the letter, the type of person it was going to, its timing, and other pertinent factors. An hour later a fine letter had been drafted, Joan had a devoted assistant, and another volunteer had added to her store of knowledge of effective leadership.

"In terms of what they have to offer" . . . that certainly was a real difference from what you'd expect of a paid worker. It involved a wholly different set of standards. If a career woman told her employer, "My husband doesn't like to have me talk business on the phone at home," or if a secretary told her employer she couldn't stay after hours to type a few letters because she had to make dinner for her husband, she wouldn't last very long.

Yet in volunteer work each volunteer pretty much sets her own "terms of employment". She often sets her limits too low, and one of the challenges of volunteer supervision is helping the individual see where and how she can make her contribution more effectively, and in a more satisfying way. Many obstacles are really "bogeymen". Some of the husbands whose wives painted them as such ogres end up urging them to take on bigger jobs. The children who had to be taken to the doctor, music lessons, etc. turn out to be quite old enough to ride a bus.

Equally often the volunteer needs protection from her own enthusiasm, lest she burn herself out and wear out the patience of her family as well. The officer of an organization who can set limits on her own activities can also set the pace for the rest of the "team." Remarks like this one will stay with the conscientious officer for years: "You know, you've taught me how to say 'no' when I've gone as far as I comfortably can, because

you say 'no' to requests that are beyond your limits, even when they are things you'd like to do." The officer who is a "whizz", who goes every place, and has everyone gasping at her and saying, "I just don't know how you do it!" is often scaring off (or using up) a generation of organizational leadership.

If she undertakes too many things and wafts a group of fellow enthusiasts along on the binge, they wear out together. If she does them alone, those coming up the ladder say, "If that's what it means to be an officer, I'll take the little jobs and stay obscure."

What are some factors that can help assure a good meeting or project—an effective use of volunteer skills?

If the idea has evolved from the thinking of more than one person and several have been enthusiastic and committed to it, the undertaking has a good chance for success.

If planning has been done well in advance so that jobs can be broken down to the smallest units of meaningful work, many people can participate and, in finding their places in the project, contribute creative ideas as well as skills to its success.

If all planning is done with as generous an allotment of time as possible to allow for the inevitable changes in personnel due to pregnancies, grandchildren, sickness, unexpected trips, household emergencies, gaps in the structure can be filled and substitutes called in.

And finally, although the volunteer should dream big dreams and set her sights high, she should never expect perfection. A well run training session or institute is a triumph and inspiration for those who attend. Let the planner enjoy this and not brood unendingly about those who didn't show up—"the ones that got away"

Bonaro Overstreet in the April, 1955 issue of the *National PTA Magazine,* says, "Wisdom and fairness demand that we learn to know and like ourselves and others, *limitations and all*; that we not demand perfection, but make the most of what we have and give others as good a chance as possible to do likewise". It seemed to Pam that this could well be the volunteer supervisor's golden rule. ◇◇

# *VOLUNTEERS IN THE CHURCH*

In many ways a church is in an enviable position. It has a substantial volunteer potential at its fingertips. One of the basic questions it faces, then, is how to harness this potential into a systematic, effective program. I would list as a matter of first importance an adequate file system on all members, their interests, capabilities, previous volunteer experience of any sort. Although many ministers think of a filing system as a time-consuming foe, the kind of information about members needed to build up a volunteer program could readily be combined with their membership file. Alongside this file would be another shorter one containing job analyses of all major, continuing volunteer positions. As volunteer needs arose, the two could be compared. In our church, functioning most actively on departmental levels, such a system has proved highly effective.

## attitudes are noted

But mechanics, however important, are only part of the story of recruiting and placing volunteers. I use the first conference I have with a prospective volunteer for our educational program not only to discern his interests and abilities but also his motives. An understanding of the attitudes and needs which motivate people to undertake volunteer positions is particularly important in church work.

Many people want to exchange leisure time for some satisfaction they get in working with or for others. Other volunteers have a sense of responsibility to their church, quite often stemming from their gratitude for help received.

Because religion is often a highly supportive matter, it sometimes attracts people who are emotionally disturbed. Their reasons for wanting to do volunteer work sometimes makes them poor risks. I have found this particularly true in recruiting volunteers for our educational and recreational program with children. The isolated person who finds it difficult to relate himself to others may be impelled to volunteer for Sunday School teaching. He finds it easy to relate to children, but he will have difficulty in working with adults in the same situation. The guilty person, especially if the guilt is caused by his own aggressive and hostile feelings, finds his guilt diminished if he can help others. He may perform rather well until his interests or position are challenged by other members of the group.

The problem of dealing with these kinds of people is heightened for the minister because of his sense of responsibility to his members, whatever their motives, and because he regards the volunteer activity of members as essential. This difficulty may be partially offset, however, by the kind of relationship he has with church members. If he is a wise and sympathetic person, affectionately regarded by members, he is in a unique position to help people face their inadequacies, and to stimulate them to growth and maturity so that they can eventually carry such responsibilities as they desire.

## understanding is essential

This leads us to consider the general importance of the personalities of the minister and of professional staff members to the volunteer program of a church. Is the minister a warm and sympathetic person? Does he understand the dynamics of his own relationship with people? Does he understand what motivates people to do volunteer work? Can he handle situations by understanding and dealing with underlying causes rather than by using measures which depend upon his authority status? No filing system can replace a lack in personal make-up.

Take, for instance, the minister's fundamental emotional response to volunteers. He should be willing to delegate responsibility and to interfere as little as possible with volunteers on the job. In other words, confidence in volunteers is vital. Clearly, if workers are effectively recruited and well trained, they can carry out their work without much advice from the minister.

There are a number of ways in which a minister may unwittingly come into conflict with volunteers because of personal insensitivity. Sometimes his zeal for a strong program, for example, may tempt him to conceive some new venture by himself. In such a situation, no matter how well-intentioned the minister may be in suggesting the idea, or how worthwhile the suggestion is, the volunteers may resent it because it comes from the minister. This is particularly true in a church where the volunteers have seen a succession of ministers and are likely to feel, with some justification, that the church program is theirs and not the minister's.

Because volunteer work in a church is often looked upon as a necessary expression of religious faith, ministers may not always be sensitive enough to volunteers' normal needs for recognition. A minister may underestimate this need because it is met for him: he is the administrative head of the church. But he needs to realize that volunteers hope for something in the way of recognition. Sometimes the importance and dignity of a volunteer position is its own compensation. But many indispensable volunteer positions lend no status, and yet the people who fill them need recognition too. Many churches use "Laymen's Sunday" to recognize volunteer workers. Two of the best ways to recognize volunteer activity—and consequently to interest more people in becoming volunteers —are to give publicity for work well done and to encourage people to take on increased responsibility.

Sometimes difficulty between a minister and volunteer workers in a church is a problem in communication. Volunteers do not always follow technical terms; they may object to something because they do not completely understand it. Misunderstanding can be overcome by giving the volunteer an opportunity to explain his point of view in his own language. Then the minister can use the volunteer's words and framework to suggest his own

point of view. The seminar method in training may take longer than a series of orientation lectures, but in the long run may be the most creative procedure for securing strong volunteer leadership with unified goals.

But there may be deeper problems at the root of conflict between a minister and volunteers. When a minister is emotionally insecure, highly qualified volunteers in his program—people usually of considerable initiative and originality—may become a threat to his status as leader. What will happen to his own position, for instance, if some volunteers know more about education than he does? If he finds it difficult to work with people who want to think in new ways or act in newly established ways, he may not find enough volunteers for his program, or only volunteers of poor caliber. He may also feel at times that the volunteers have different values and goals than the church has. How often a fundamental unwillingness to share responsibilities with others or to entertain new ideas is rationalized: "It's easier and less bother for me to do it myself!"

## always the same people?

The minister must sell his church members on the value of continually recruiting and training new volunteers. Quite often his greatest difficulty is with volunteer workers who have outlived their usefulness in one area and ought to consider another. Or an organization within the church may be controlled by a group of "old-timers" who manage each year to elect people from their own inner group to the offices. In the meantime younger and enthusiastic newcomers have joined the organization. They are, however, systematically excluded from positions of leadership. The result is an ineffectual organizational program, less and less capable of drawing new members.

Perhaps the most common feature of volunteer work in the church is the development of a small core of responsible volunteer workers who do their work so well they are turned to again and again. Finally, resentful because they are overworked and because others will not share responsibility, they relinquish their positions.

A church volunteer program must, in its own way, balance the value of the long-range volunteer's experi-

ence and wisdom with a continual rotation of responsibilities which brings fresh enthusiasm and new ideas. Just as it is deadly to a vital church program for a minister to think of volunteers as a headache it is also deadly to have volunteer workers who have come to look upon their position as sacrosanct—who refuse either to give way or to share responsibility with newcomers.

## the professional volunteer

Professionally-trained volunteers may spell the difference between a mediocre and an unusually effective program. In a large city parish, a minister is virtually driven to enlisting experts from his congregation because the program includes so many responsibilities for which the minister has had little training. But any minister knows it is not easy to recruit the professionally-trained person to perform volunteer services. The librarian, artist, or public relations man is usually pressed for time. Or, just as serious, he may not feel challenged by a prospective volunteer position.

These difficulties can be lessened, however, if he feels his services are honestly needed and if he is granted some freedom to develop his own convictions about a specific program. When a common understanding is worked out which does justice to the church's religious goals and the professional's techniques, professionally-trained volunteers can relieve the minister of considerable supervisory and training responsibilities.

For the most part these people are delighted to serve their church in an area in which they feel competent. The professional librarian supervises the church library; the banker serves on the Board of Trustees in charge of investment; a newspaper reporter assists in church publicity; an advertising and public relations man is chairman of the Men's Council; a woman trained in elementary education and child psychology supervises a Sunday School department; a man trained in public school physical education is on a committee supervising the church's recreational program; a psychiatrist and attorney act as consultants to the minister in his counseling program. And this is only the beginning. Actually the whole church program is built around recruiting people to do the work they are eminently qualified for. ◇◇

# *INTRODUCING THE AEA*

The AEA (Adult Education Association of the United States of America) is a non-profit organization founded in May, 1951, as an instrument for developing a united adult education movement. The general purposes of AEA, as stated in its Constitution, are:

—"To further the concept of adult education as a process continuing throughout life.

—"To promote and develop adult education in the United States by affording opportunities to professional and non-professional adult educators to increase their competence and by encouraging and assisting organizations and agencies . . . to develop adult education activities and to work together in the interests of adult education.

—"To receive and disseminate information about adult education.

—"To promote the balanced development of educational services for adult persons in the United States.

—"To cooperate with adult education agencies internationally."

United in the AEA to further these purposes through a program including field services, conferences, publications, and public relations, are over 12,000 men and women who work with adults in formal and informal educational and training programs. These leaders represent every sector of American society—education, labor, agriculture, industry, religion, social welfare, government service, and a host of voluntary associations.

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